

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 4ENEW YORK TIMES
25 May 1986

Walker Lives Up to His Star Billing

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WHEN a verdict depends heavily on the testimony of a single witness, there comes a time when that witness goes on trial along with the defendant. A case in point: the espionage proceedings against Jerry A. Whitworth, which for the last few weeks temporarily became a trial of the Government's star witness, John A. Walker Jr.

Mr. Walker, who has acknowledged spying for 17 years and recruiting his son and older brother to steal military data that he sold to the Soviet Union, did not have a trial of his own. He pleaded guilty to espionage along with his son, Michael L. Walker, in Baltimore in October. His brother, Arthur J. Walker, did not take the stand at his own brief trial in which he was convicted in Norfolk, Va., in August.

Thus, John Walker's testimony at Mr. Whitworth's trial was more than the presentation of crucial evidence to bolster the prosecution's allegations that the defendant stole sensitive Navy cryptographic data and messages and passed them to Mr. Walker in exchange for \$332,000 over a 10-year period. It was also the first and only chance for the jury and the public to assess Mr.

Walker's truthfulness and, in the process, get a close-up look at America's First Family of Espionage.

The courtroom heard from a handful of Walkers: John, the seemingly unremorseful peddler of military secrets; Arthur, the mousy older brother who had financial problems; Michael, the son who stole to please his dad; Barbara Joy Crowley Walker, the former wife who finally blew the whistle, and Laura Walker Snyder, the daughter who served as the catalyst who moved her mother to action.

For a time prosecutors struggled to keep what they have characterized as the most important espionage case in the last 30 years from degenerating into a soap opera. Spectators were left with a host of titillating questions that nearly overshadowed the matter of Mr. Whitworth's guilt or innocence. Did John threaten to kill Laura's husband if he disclosed John's spying activities to authorities? Did John tell Barbara to become a prostitute to pay the family bills? Did Barbara have an affair with Arthur while she was still married to John?

For his part, John Walker stuck to his story that he originally recruited Mr. Whitworth to steal secrets when they served as Navy radiomen in 1974 in San Diego, after determining to his own satisfaction that the defendant "had larceny in his heart." But Mr. Walker also appeared to hurt the prosecution by insisting that he never

told any of his recruits, including Mr. Whitworth, that the stolen materials were destined for the Soviet Union.

Arthur Walker, a retired Navy officer, substantiated John Walker's story that he stole classified military data from the defense contractor for whom he worked and passed it to his brother. But on the topic of Mr. Whitworth, he could only say that John Walker told him that a person on the West Coast was also involved.

Michael Walker testified that his mother told him when he was 13 years old that his father was spying for the Soviet Union, but he did not believe her until years later, when John Walker recruited him. He told of a manipulative father who was pleased that his son "had the guts" to steal classified information from the aircraft carrier to which he was assigned.

His older sister, Laura Walker Snyder, testified about their father's unsuccessful attempts to enlist her as a spy while she was in the Army. Like her younger brother, she said she knew Mr. Whitworth but did not know if he was involved with her father's illegal activities.

Barbara Joy Crowley Walker said she told Mr. Whitworth in 1973 that she knew her husband was trying to recruit him as a spy. Three years later, she said, she reassured Mr. Whitworth that she would not turn her husband in just because they were about to file for divorce.